



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

CINDY HYDE-SMITH
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and Mississippi Department of Education Celebrate Farm to School Week at Rouse Elementary School

JACKSON, MISS. --- The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Department of Education held the first Farm to School Week Celebration today at Rouse Elementary in Brandon, Mississippi. Students had the opportunity to dine with special guests including Governor Phil Bryant, Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith, Interim Deputy State Superintendent of Education Dr. Kim Benton, Director of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools Scott Clements, and the actual growers of many of the items featured on today's menu.

Local farmers, including Jerry Hutto of Waynesboro, Louis Guedon of Natchez, Allen Eubanks of Lucedale, and Becky Beard representing the Mississippi Poultry Association, spoke to Rouse Elementary first grade students to discuss the importance of agriculture and eating healthy fruits and vegetables. Students then escorted the farmers and state officials to the cafeteria, where Mississippi-raised chicken, locally-grown peas, grape tomatoes, cucumbers, and blueberries were served.

"By using Mississippi farm products in our school cafeterias, we can connect our students with the food they eat and teach them about the relationship between nutrition and health," said Governor Phil Bryant. "Not only will we be supporting our farmers and our agricultural economy, Mississippi children will learn important lessons about making smart health choices. I appreciate Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith for spearheading this effort in our schools," added Bryant.

Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith commented, "It's wonderful to see students excited about eating Mississippi grown foods right here in our school cafeterias. By providing nutritious locally-grown fruits, vegetables, and other food items to our students, we are not only opening up marketing opportunities for our farmers, we are also educating students on where their food is coming from. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is proud of our partnership with the Mississippi Department of Education and the efforts being made to purchase fruits and vegetables direct from our farmers."

Through a Farm to School Program, the Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce have made successful efforts to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables grown in the state that are served in lunchrooms across Mississippi. “The Mississippi Department of Education has worked with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce for over ten years to provide Mississippi students with healthy meals and to support our local farmers. Through this partnership, thousands of cases of locally grown fruits and vegetables will be delivered to Mississippi schools this year. The Farm to School program increases student consumption of fruits and vegetables and helps students make better nutritional choices,” stated Scott Clements, Director of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools for the Mississippi Department of Education.

The first week in October was designated as Mississippi Farm to School Week by the Mississippi Legislature earlier this year. Farm to School Week was introduced to encourage the serving of locally grown and locally raised agricultural products in school meals and to recognize the substantial economic health benefits of farm to school programs. During this first week of October, many schools around the state are incorporating Mississippi grown products, including produce, into their menus. Farm to School Week will draw attention to the vast number of crops that are grown in the state as well as serve as an educational tool to teach children where their food comes from. October was designated as National Farm to School Month, by the National Farm to School Network, founded in 2007. Today, Farm to School programs exist in all 50 states. School officials that would like more resources regarding Farm to School Week and Farm to School Month can visit www.farmtoschoolweek.org, a website created by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

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Photos attached.

Cutline for photo:

Governor Phil Bryant and Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Cindy Hyde-Smith dine with first grade students at Rouse Elementary School during Mississippi Farm to School Week Celebration where Mississippi chicken, peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, and blueberries were on the menu.



